

# Do I love?

Heather Smith *reflects on* John 14:15-21

**A**m I loved?" is a common question. We can become obsessed about whether the people around us really care. Some find it so hard to accept that a life partner really loves them that they drive them away because of incessant questioning and suspicion. A good relationship can end up in tatters because of insecurity. At the root of it all is often the belief that "I am not good enough. Why would anyone love me?"

Jesus turns the question around. We should be asking not "Am I loved?" but "Do I love?" It completely changes the focus. Instead of being crippled by our inward doubts and obsessive concern about what others think of us, we can get out of our own heads and enjoy the scene out there.

"Who do I love?" The possibilities are endless, from those who may become our closest relationships, to every human being who deserves our love just because they're human. Our horizons expand and new possibilities open up before us.

When it comes to God, if we love, then we will certainly find that God loves us. If we don't love God, it isn't that we aren't loved, but we will never notice the love that overflows towards us. This is the love that truly addresses our underlying insecurities about whether we are good enough. If the greatest source of love that exists believes we are, and showers love upon us, then we need have no doubt. 🍷



**God of love, fill us with a deep belief that we are loved and, grounded in that love, help us to love others. Lead us towards the glorious possibilities that love brings, that our lives may enrich those around us. Amen.**

## Godparents and godparenting

by Caroline Hodgson

Godparenting has evolved through generations of Christians and is, of course, inextricably linked with the practice of baptism, itself rooted in ancient Jewish purification rites. Early Christianity was a persecuted faith, so an important function of godparents – who were initially known as sponsors – was to confirm the sincerity of any adult who was seeking to be baptised and to protect the community from being infiltrated by persecutors. Over time the focus

of the role shifted away from acting as a gatekeeper of the Church, to vocalising the confession of faith on behalf of the person being baptised and acting as a guarantor of their faith going forward.

Understanding the history and background may be helpful for parents when it comes to choosing godparents for their children, and can help godparents and godchildren themselves – particularly older godchildren – carve out a more meaningful and fulfilling role and relationship. Even for someone who is not a parent, godparent or godchild, it provides a fascinating insight into the Christian faith. What does godparenting mean to you and how can your understanding of it inform and deepen your faith life? 🍷

## Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

I keep a notebook to record how many eggs are laid each day by the hens, ducks, bantams and geese and at this time of year there's lots going on. So added to the daily tally is a record of late lambs being born, any medicines administered and the fields in which the sheep are currently

grazing. It's a brief note of all these things but it tells the deeper story of our lives here as shepherd and keeper. This time last year eight ducklings hatched, two lambs were born, the geese stopped laying and the older collie had a fit and recovered.

Underlying the activity is the mix of emotion and the hard work. So when I read the account in Genesis of a day's creation, when God "saw that it was good", I can imagine the work and emotion underlying those simple words and share in them myself. 🍷

“**The most eloquent prayer is the prayer through hands that heal and bless.**

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist