

God Loves Me!

Remember when you were a child with no concerns whatsoever? You were fed, had clothes to wear, had toys, had a place to sleep, had someone to take care of everything without you even thinking about it, had someone to hug you and make it better. You had everything you needed and you didn't even understand the concepts of worrying or prioritizing or struggling; it was just there. That was a beautiful, simple life that at times we might like to go back to, if only we could. As adults, providing the food, toys, etc takes lots of work, to be sure. But in many ways, we *can* have a life free of concerns again. The confidence of having our needs met and worries answered is ours right now. You think I'm jesting? Let's see what Isaiah tells us in the first five verses of chapter 43:

But now, this is what the LORD says—

he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

³ For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

⁴ Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you,

I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life.

⁵ Do not be afraid, for I am with you

God is the Master Planner and Creator of the world around us and he made each of us just as he wants us to be. He put the world into motion and he daily wills every part of the world to continue according to his design and his plan. As our Creator, he knows everything there is to know about our human bodies and minds. He knows what is right with us and what is wrong with us, and how to fix it. He has given the doctors, nurses and all your caregivers every bit of their knowledge and he guides how they use this knowledge. He doesn't need to run tests to determine what to do next; there is nothing new for him to learn about us.

God knows each of us intimately and calls us by name. When we were baptized he came down and touched us, claimed us as his own, called us by name and said "[insert name]You are mine." None of us is insignificant or just a number to God. He knows the most minute details about us, like the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). God knows us intimately, even knows when we sit down or stand up, knows our thoughts before we put them into words, knows every minute of every day of our life and

has since before time began. (Psalm 139) He knows what has you concerned right now [insert details if appropriate] and he knows what will happen tomorrow and the day after that.

Not only does he know each of us intimately, God loves us beyond measure despite all our sins and weaknesses. Because of this love Jesus came to earth to live as a man, with all of our pains, temptations, and challenges, but he did what we cannot do, he loved a perfect life without sin. Then he took all of our sins on his shoulders and suffered a torturous death so that his blood could pay the price required to remove all the barriers between God and the human race. Because of Jesus, God looks at us and sees the perfection and beauty of his Son. God did all of this because he wants us to spend eternity with him in heaven. With confidence we know we will be with God, in heaven when we die because we are very precious to him. Can there be any greater comfort or joy?

God is unsurpassed in power, in knowledge, in wisdom, in love. Surely, he has every capability and every desire to care for us in every situation. He has promised to see us through the rough waters, the roaring rivers, the flames and fires of life. Our bodies may suffer, but even then he is beside us and will comfort us and lead the way. Our bodies and our souls are his and he will never allow anything to separate us from his love.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Creator of all things and Master Physician, we thank and praise you for your love and mercy. We thank you for sending us a Savior and giving us the faith to believe your many promises. You have seen fit to allow this illness to visit your servant [insert name]. In these difficult days, we ask you to bring your comfort to him/her and those who love him/her. Help them focus on your promise not to let anything come to them that is not for their ultimate good and blessing. Give them the strength to face each new day with the confidence that you are in control and working only for their good. Bless the work of the physicians and other caregivers as they provide care. If it is your will, restore [insert name] to health; nevertheless, let your will be done. We place [insert name] wholly in your hands. We come to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

The devotion was written by Marilyn Miller, a staff minister in Houston, TX. This devotion is intended to be shared at the bedside of a seriously ill adult. It would be appropriate to personalize the devotion by listing situations specific to the individual, inserting his/her name in the discussion about God calling us by name, etc. This devotion is a bit longer because it has been my experience there are times when people need a longer message to meditate on after the visit. There are times, however, when the message would need to be much shorter.

The theological content was reviewed by Martin Luther College Professor David Sellnow.