

# Great Gifts in Small Packages

Laura Urista

**D**ear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Two Christmases ago, after exchanging all the other presents, our daughter gave my husband Juan and me a small beautifully wrapped package. She had saved it and asked us to open it last. At first, we were a little confused, because the contents looked like a positive Covid test, but I suddenly realized it was a positive pregnancy test. The tears started flowing as I understood that we were going to have a new addition to the family!

What joy the news of a precious new life brings to any family. At this time of year, we are also reminded of a great gift who came in a small package. The infant Jesus was born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. That small package held the Messiah—the greatest gift of all time—the Savior to save mankind from all sin and to make a way for us to enter the family relationship of our triune God.

From the beginning, all of humanity was created to join in the deep loving relationship of the family of God—a relationship of love (*agape*) between Father, Son and Spirit that had already existed before the creation of the world.

In the signature quote above, we are admonished to “love one another, for love comes from

God.” The word translated into our English word “love” in this verse is the Greek word “*agapao*” or “*agape*.” I’ve read that *agape* refers to the unconditional love of God, and that is true, but that’s only part of the meaning. *Agape* also refers to the love that arises from a keen sense of the value and worth of the object of our love. We are commanded to “*agape*” one another, in other words, to have a keen sense of the worth and value in others.

The last part of the verse says, “everyone who loves is born of God and **knows God.**” But what does it really mean to “*know God*”?

The Greek word for “know” used here is “*ginosko*” and it is often translated elsewhere in the New Testament as “to perceive, to discern, to understand, to be assured or to view with favor.”

God understands, perceives, discerns, is assured about us and views us with favor. God **knows** all about us and he loves us anyway. God loves us more than anyone in this physical life ever will or ever could.

Those who “*know*” God are in a **deeply intimate**, loving relationship with God. God doesn’t just *have* love as one of many attributes of his character... God IS Love. Love is the essence of God’s nature. **God is love** throughout eternity. Out of God’s loving generosity he invites us to be a part of his family in the



“Gaga” Laura with then one-day-old granddaughter, Natalia.

circle of divine love and to share his love with others.

This is the greatest gift of all—to know God and to be in a loving relationship with God and with others. Here is my gift to you this Christmas. It can’t be wrapped up, even in a small box but the words are a treasure to me. It’s from a song called “*Nature Boy*” made famous by Nat King Cole, which ends with these profound and timeless words:

“*The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.*” I pray you’ll be wrapped up in the deep, intimate, loving relationship God invites us all to enjoy as a part of his family, this Christmas and always. □

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