



## THE GIFT OF BEING YOU (Part 2)

Most people probably go through life without ever experiencing unconditional love. So often we put conditions on our love and acceptance of people. What gets communicated through conditional love is, “You’re okay as long as you think, talk, and act like me.” Since most people don’t think, talk, or act like me, people around me get the message “You’re not okay the way you are.” Although these messages are not directly spoken, the message comes in loud and clear.

Conditional love is a controlling kind of love. It is a love that lacks boundaries. It doesn’t allow for individual differences, beliefs, preferences, and styles. It’s a “boxed-in” love. As long as you fit in my box, you are good. If you are outside my box, then you are bad or not okay. If you say and do what I want you to do then I’ll love you. Judgment, distancing, shaming, silence treatment, pouting, and all sorts of other manipulative behaviors seem to follow when the “conditions” of loving are not met.

Even in loving families or Christian communities we are taught to love one another deeply and to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Yet we have great difficulty learning how to love ourselves and learning how to love one another. Frequently people feel judged by their family or by their church so they start disconnecting and turning to other sources in an attempt to feel connected, loved, and accepted. **Have you noticed where people go and what they do when they are looking for love and acceptance?**

- 
- 
- 

In The Gift of Being You (part 1), we started our discussion by talking about people who celebrated you and how they encouraged you to be yourself. Today, we are going to focus on giving that same gift back to the people around us. Just as we all need supportive relationships to help us trust, love, grow, and develop, we need to extend that gift to one another.

### **People grow into their God-given potential when they:**

1. have opportunities to try something new.
2. try something they are not designed for and they fail.
3. receive many chances to learn how to do something right and well.
4. receive grace in response to failure and encouragement to try something new or different.
5. are told someone likes the way they are.
6. are told how good they are at something.
7. receive corrective feedback.
8. are appropriately rewarded for doing what God has designed them to do.
9. recognize who they are and what they are doing help people and bring glory to God.

- **How long would it take to build a community where we recognize and affirm people?**
- **Are you good at giving or receiving unconditional love?**
- **When was the last time you showed appreciation to someone who was very different from you? How did they respond to you?**
- **If you are learning to love the way God made you, will you do your part to help those around to learn to love the way God made them?**

*“I’m fearfully and wonderfully made”*

“**Health Talks**” are designed to help us learn to talk and deal with one another in ways that build understanding and a healthy, growing, supportive, Christian community.