

con-de-scend (kän du send) *vi.* [ME. *con-scenden* < OFr. *con-scendre* < LL.(Ec.) *condescendere*, to let oneself down, *con-* descend < L. *com-*, together + *descendere*, DESCEND] **1.** to descend voluntarily to the level, regarded as lower, of the person one is dealing with; be graciously willing to do something regarded as beneath one's dignity; deign **2.** to deal with others in a proud or haughty way **3.** [Obs.] to make concessions; agree; assent —**SYN.** see STOOP.



THE WORD “CONDESCENSION” HAS FALLEN ON HARD TIMES. What once was considered an act of grace has now been relegated to the realm of snobbery. But Christ’s act of incarnation—of coming to earth in flesh—was a supreme example of this word’s first and best definition.

No Such Burden

The Son of God has never needed anything. He always has been, to the uttermost, complete. Men may have ulterior motives for “graciously” condescending to an inferior. They may seek the acclaim that accompanies unselfish acts; they may seek a tax write-off; or they may seek the very human reward of feeling better about themselves. But the Son’s motives for condescending to man were wholly outside of Himself.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

This depth of love—in a diluted form—is not unknown in man, but it is exceedingly rare. Man is, by nature, a self-centered beast preoccupied with his own survival and the acquisition of vain glory. His favorite appliance is the mirror.



And why not? *All* flesh is preoccupied with survival. The beasts of the fields expend most of their energy each day seeking out and obtaining life-sustaining nourishment. Observe the busy squirrels and birds, the cattle grazing and chewing, the wolves and coyotes on the hunt. Those in the wild are always on the prowl for their next meal—and when they are not eating, they are procreating: survival of the species. In most ways man is superior to the beasts of the field, but his motivating force remains the same: the survival and advancement of himself.

The Son of God bears no such burden. He is not vain; He does not concern Himself with His own survival, for He is eternal. He always has been—and always will be. In addition, unlike man He is not in need of salvation from a death of eternal torment. Thus for Himself He need do nothing. He is perfect.

For Man

So then, why? Why did He do it? Why did He bother with us? Why did the eternal, all-sufficient, gloriously beautiful Son of God leave the purity of heaven to become uncomfortable flesh?

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Ephesians 5:1-2

There is no earthly instrument sufficient to measure the profound depth of Christ's love for fallen man. We cannot answer why such love exists. It just does. It is a love more steady than a mother's love for her child, more deep than a child's love for a parent, more mysterious than a husband's love for his wife.

It really is not possible for mere man to understand the measure of Christ's love for His creation. The best we can do is measure it against the highest example of human love we can imagine—and then double it. But even that misses the point.

From God's other known attributes we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, that be-

cause God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because He is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit; because He is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is immense, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence and from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed.

A.W. Tozer

For the Father

If we cannot comprehend the measure of the love Jesus has for man, we certainly cannot fathom the depth of the mystical, resplendent, passionate devotion He has for God the Father. Indeed, even an understanding of the relationship itself is beyond our pitiful gray cells. The two are one; with the Spirit they are God, the tri-unity of God, the Godhead. The Spirit—author of the written word—refers to God in the plural:

Then God [plural: *elohim*] said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:26

Yet each Member of the Godhead has His own "job description," as it were, administering, in ways sometimes unique from the other two, the relationship God has with man. So, God the Spirit supplies the seed to join with the egg in the virgin Mary so that she might give birth to Jesus: God the Son incarnated. All the while, God the Father remains high and exalted on His heavenly throne. No, in the flesh we will never comprehend the mystical intricacies of Their relationship.

It is enough for the moment that we understand that Jesus did what He did, in coming to earth, not just out of His love for man, but out of His love for God the Father. Even the *nature* of that love is beyond our senses, for it is a unique blend of distinctives: adoration combined with subservi-

ence, devotion combined with obedience, unity combined with agonizing separation. More than that, the love Jesus has for the Father cannot be removed from His steadfast commitment to the Father's glory.

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

John 17:1-5

No Greater Love

Christ's gracious condescension is best explained by His own words.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:12-13

He left the glorious light of heaven for the dingy muck of earth for everyone but Himself. He did it for His people, and He did it for His Father. He did it to glorify God the Father, and He did it to share His glory and privileges with man.

He stooped, not with arrogance or snobbish pity, but with tender compassion and love. Out of true condescension Jesus became flesh so that He might in flesh suffer and die for those He loved.

No greater love, indeed. dsj