

MY GOLD STARS...

John 15:9, 16 - I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Live within my love. And you didn't choose me! I chose you! I appointed you to go and produce lovely fruit always.

John 3:16 - For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

As a young girl in elementary school, my teachers were always pasting gold stars all over everything that I did well. The stars were to tell me that I had done very well. What joy it brought to my heart to take home those papers with the gold stars on them. My mother was always so proud of those gold stars. It made me feel like I was "the greatest."

And later on in life, I became a wife, a mother, a grandmother and there were those cards or letters that were inscribed, "I love you. You are the greatest....wife, mother, grandmother in the world." Those words were written in the script of a wonderful husband or the uneven script of a small child. Those words, those handmade or store bought cards, felt even more wonderful than the teacher's gold stars. They brought tears to my eyes and a smile so big that it filled my heart and my soul. Not even a personal letter from the President of the United States could have made me feel happier or more loved. To be the "greatest" in the eyes and hearts of those you love is an honor that brings both joy and responsibility. For love encompasses not only the joyous moments but the tough ones...the moments for forgiveness, the moments of tough love, the moments of great loss.

"You're the greatest" are also words that each of us receives from a kind and loving Savior...words that bring honor, joy, responsibility. But also they bring abundant grace, loving care, and joy and peace beyond measure. Many times our Lord said "You are the greatest" with His life and words. He said them when He left his heavenly home to be born in a lowly stable. He said them as He walked and worked as one of us. He said them when He rebuked the temptations of Satan and the world. He said them when He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem. He said them when He stood before Pilate...and in Gethsemane. He said them with deafening and passionate clarity on Calvary's cross. All of His life was a personal declaration of His love for each one of us! He says, "You're the GREATEST! I have chosen you! I have chosen you to be mine forever! He is a master of giving out "GOLD STARS" and giving us a Bible with His personal script of love for each of us in it. Join me this week as we seek to understand his enormous love for each of us.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, how we give you thanks for the gold stars and the words that have brought us joy and love during our lives. It is indeed awesome to feel that someone thinks "we are the greatest." Thank you for loved ones who have filled our hearts with love and forgiveness. And forgive us, Lord, for not praising you all of the time for all of the ways you have shown your love for us. Create in us grateful hearts filled with thanksgiving for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon us and empower us to be diligent about making others feel like "they are the greatest." Show us how to bring your love, your presence, your forgiveness and your joy into the lives of others. In your precious name we pray. Amen