

## What is the meaning of - beloved - in the Bible?

A beloved person is one who is dearly loved. In the Old Testament, the word beloved is used repeatedly in the Song of Solomon as the newlyweds express their deep affection for each other (Song of Solomon 5:9; 6:1, 3). In this instance, beloved implies romantic feelings. Nehemiah 13:26 also uses the word beloved to describe King Solomon as “beloved by his God” (ESV). In fact, at Solomon’s birth, “because the Lord loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah” (2 Samuel 12:25). Jedidiah means “loved by the Lord.”

For reasons known only to Him, God sets special affection on some people and uses them in greater ways than He uses others. Israel is often called “beloved of God” (e.g., Deuteronomy 33:12; Jeremiah 11:15). God chose this people group as His beloved in order to set them apart for His divine plan to save the world through Jesus (Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Genesis 12:3).

The word beloved is also used repeatedly throughout the New Testament. A notable use of the word is at the baptism of Jesus. In this scene, all three Persons of the Trinity are revealed. God the Father speaks to the Son from heaven: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Then the “Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested on Him” (Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). God again calls Jesus “beloved” at the Mount of Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matthew 17:5). We can learn a little about the loving relationship shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by God’s use of the word beloved. Jesus echoes that truth in John 10:17 when He says, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.”

Many New Testament writers used the word beloved to address the recipients of their letters (e.g., Philippians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 2:11). Most of the time, the Greek word translated “beloved” is *agapētoi*, related to the word *agape*. In the inspired letters, beloved means “friends dearly loved by God.” In the New Testament, the use of the word beloved implies more than human affection. It suggests an esteem for others that comes from recognizing their worth as children of God. Those addressed were more than friends; they were brothers and sisters in Christ and therefore highly valued.

Since Jesus is the One whom God loves, Beloved is also used as a title for Christ. Paul speaks of how believers are the beneficiaries of God’s “glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6, ESV). The Father loves the Son, and He loves and blesses us for the Son’s sake.

All those adopted into God’s family through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ are beloved by the Father (John 1:12; Romans 8:15). It is an amazing, lavish love: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). Because God has shed His love on us, we are free to apply the words of Song of Solomon 6:3 to our relationship with Christ: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”