

Eternity Daily Bible Study

The Importance Of Love

Number: 06

Verses: John 13:34,35, John 15:17

Topic: Disciples = Lovers

Date: 23rd July 2011

John 13:34,35 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

John 15:17 *These things I command you, that you love one another.*

The outward, world-facing, sign of truly following Christ, is having love for one another. If we have love for another everyone out there will know that we are "for real" as Christians. If we don't love one another, and just bicker, squabble, divide and engage in law-suits against each other, then the world will call us "just a bunch of hypocrites"!

If you have love, then you are a disciple of Jesus Christ the Nazarene. If you don't have love, then you are not Christ's disciple. You might be the disciple of a pastor or a disciple of a theologian a denomination or a cult, but without love you are not Christ's disciple.

Every course on basic Christian discipleship should focus on teaching Christians to love one another. For knowledge puffs up but love builds up! (1 Corinthians 8:1) so a course that is all head knowledge and does not emphasize the practical aspects of "loving one another" will only produce puffed up baby Christians, and not edified disciples. However a course that teaches people to truly deeply love one another will be blessed by God (because it teaches people to obey His commandment) and produce real Christians!

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not about having a mentor or an accountability partner (rather your mentor is the Holy Spirit) and neither is it about returning to some ideal free-wheeling church structure from the first century. Lovers are disciples and disciples are lovers. If your life is all about loving people then and then only are you a disciple!

Selfish religiosity and churchmanship are not identical with discipleship. Knowing the rules of church order and the church constitution so well that you can crush all opposition at the member's meeting is not discipleship (though it may make you a very powerful deacon).

Discipleship is about knowing God, the God who is love, and who wants you to love others and to have eternal life:

John 17:3 *And this is life eternal, that they (Christ's disciples) might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

In the ministry of Jesus Christ there was a clear distinction between the crowds who

followed Him and the disciples who obeyed Him. The crowds came to be healed and fed and to hear stories and sermons. On the other hand, the disciples were with Jesus "through His trials" and wanted to be His friend, to love Him and be loved by Him and to do what He did, in total obedience (except for Judas).

The two verses below give us a bit of a glimpse into the costly and obedient friendship that Jesus was actually looking for:

Luke 22:28-29 *You are those who have continued with Me in My trials. (29) And I appoint a kingdom to you, as My Father has appointed to Me,*

John 15:12-15 *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (15) No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

Friendship with Jesus means doing "whatever I command you". It also means continuing with Him in His trials and laying down our lives for one another. The upside of this is that we get to know everything that Jesus has heard from the Father, and we are treated as much more than mere servants (who are given instructions without understanding what they mean) and that, after the resurrection, a kingdom awaits us.

There was no kingdom for the selfish demanding crowds. In fact it was taken away from them and given "to others" (Luke 20:16). Without love they became nothing.

Unfortunately our modern church philosophy is oriented toward attracting the selfish demanding crowd rather than making obedient disciples who truly love one another. The crowds happily turned up, got healed, sat on the grass and listened attentively and said nice things, even at one point being so enthusiastic that they wanted to make Jesus King (John 6:15)!

But despite this enthusiasm the crowds were certainly not disciples. They did not love Jesus at any depth. Once things got inconvenient and the high priests gave them money they happily cried "Crucify Him!" By analogy, any pastor who you has an immature crowd in his/her church, and has few disciples, can expect to get crucified.

Whenever Jesus wanted to turn a follower into a disciple He set them a challenge of renunciation in the name of practical love. For instance in Matthew 19 the Rich Young Ruler is asked to sell all and give it to the poor and follow Jesus, and later on in that same chapter Peter indicates that he has "forsaken all things" to follow Christ (Matthew 19:16-30). Other examples are Zaccheus, Matthew's call, and the sacrifices made by the early apostles and Christian communities. God calls us out of our selfish comfortable existences to forsake all things for the sake of God's love.

"Discipleship = living in sacrificial agape love" when we do that everyone will know that we are true followers of Jesus Christ the Lord!

Blessings,

John Edmiston (johned@aibi.ph)

Chairman/ CEO

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