

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO LOVE?

(John 13:34, 35)

Introduction:

1. It is ludicrous that God has from the beginning had to command us to love. Why is something that is so good and so beneficial for us and all around us so neglected that it must be commanded?
2. Why, in other words, is it so hard to love?
3. Let us consider three reasons why many people struggle to love as we have been commanded: many do not know what it means; many love themselves too much; and many are just too busy to consider God's love and imitate it.

Discussion:

I. Many don't know what it means.

- A. The word itself.
 1. In the Greek language there are four words translated "love": *storge* (familial love); *eros* (passionate love); *phileo* (common likes); and *agape* (godly love or a committed love that seeks the other person's best despite what it may cost us). *Agape* is the word used in John 13:34, 35.
 2. In the Hebrew language there are two main words translated "love": *ahab* and *keset*. *Keset* is usually translated as lovingkindness but carries with it the idea of covenant loyalty.
 3. English has one word and it is often misused. If we define what we mean by love as being the equivalent to *agape*, then we understand that love is seeking another person's good despite what it might cost us (John 14:15; 10:17; 15:9-17).
- B. No good examples. Many people have, sadly, never seen this kind of love in their upbringing. They did not see between their parents, they did not experience it from their parents (remember = what you reward will be repeated), they have not seen it in the circle of acquaintances.
- C. Good news! Even though someone may have never seen true love or been loved by another person, all people have the perfect example of this love in Jesus, and are so loved by God.

II. Many love themselves too much.

- A. Can't see the them for the me. It is Narcissus all over again. Narcissus was a hunter who was very attractive, but when he caught sight of his own reflection in a pool of water he lost all will to live and just sat there looking at himself until he died.
- B. Christian love, *agape*, is tied to self-denial. And when Jesus gave His command for us to love, it is an active verb, not a selfish introspection. Note 1 John 4:19-5:4.
- C. Let's look at two good examples of Christian love: John 13:1 and 1 Thess. 2.

III. Many are too busy to consider God's love and imitate it.

- A. "Lookin' for love in all the wrong places" by Johnny Lee.
 1. The book of Ecclesiastes is THE textbook on this issue of seeking satisfaction "under the sun".
 2. Looking for love and how to love from stuff (that which perishes with the using) and/or the people of this world is vanity of vanities.
- B. "Love was with me all the while" lyrics from Survivor's The Search is Over.
 1. We need to stop and recognize the love of God (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:1; et al).
 2. We need to keep on learning of His love for us (the Bible ought to be the ultimate cherished love letter). If only our fridge was big enough to display it all☺
- C. Solomon wrote that "the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). In a similar vein, the love of God is the source of all true love: for self and for others (cp. Jas. 1:17; 1 John 4:19).

Conclusion:

1. How do we obey our Lord's command to love as He loved/loves in this unloving world? In order to accomplish this we must continue to fill ourselves with the love of God, and it will overflow into all of our life. Truly we love God because He first loved us, and truly we will love others if we love God.
2. Invitation.

MORE ON “WHY IS IT SO HARD TO LOVE?”

1. Obstacles to love.
 - A. A juvenile understanding of what love is.
 - It is not instant gratification.
 - It is not simply that which is pleasurable (from sexual relations to chocolate).
 - It is most often something that is worked for in order to accomplish.
 - It is emotional but only when that emotion is tied to truth.
 - B. A juvenile understanding of the reality of our existence.
 - To deny the spiritual nature of our lives is to deny true love.
 - Understanding and believing the reality of our existence is THE only way to love as Jesus loved, and commanded us to love.
 - Self is the greatest obstacle to loving as Jesus loved, and as we are commanded to love.
2. The Letter to the Philippians is truly a love letter, but not in the way many people think.
 - A. Chapter 1 = Paul’s greetings and relating of the dire circumstances he finds himself in for their sakes! His expression of Christ-like love in that he would prefer to suffer more in this life in order to help them, than seek what is best for himself.
 - B. Chapter 2 = Paul’s explanation and instruction on how to love like Jesus loved, and as He commanded: for the hope laid up for us; deny self (empty self of self); serve God and others unto death; be rewarded by God; and then another example of Christ-like love in Epaphroditus.
 - C. Chapter 3 = Paul’s warning against those who would seek to steal our love of God and others. This is followed by Paul again explaining the reward/hope/incentive for loving as Jesus loved and commanded us to love. Paul encouraged the brethren to follow the good examples they had unto Christ-like love.
 - D. Chapter 4 = Application of what Paul had taught them about love (one might say a lab to go with the instruction). Refocus on the joy that ought to result in loving God and loving like God. Instruction on how to keep the joy tied to our loving as Jesus loved and as He commanded us to love. Personal example of that love Paul was teaching/encouraging them to have.

LOVE AS JESUS LOVED!