

Let Us Love

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Life need not be complicated to be effective. Life involves basically two things: a man's relationship with God and a man's relationship with his fellows. Every attitude, every motive, every plan, every motion is directed to one or both of these two things. When the Bible speaks of man's two relationships, it does so with simple, easy-to-understand illustrations. For instance, we are told by Jesus, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). In thus saying He eliminates any other way. He tells us that there are only two "ways" in life: the broad way that leads to destruction and the narrow way that leads to life everlasting (Matt. 7:13-14). That's simple enough, isn't it? He further tells us that we can choose to be worldly in our thinking or otherworldly (Rom. 8:5-f), saying, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the thing of the Spirit." And again, "for to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). So there are only two ways of directing our lives. One begins with spiritual thinking, the other with fleshly thinking. It's as simple as that. Ultimately, there is heaven and there is hell; and the choice is ours. That's all simple enough, don't you think?

Let me suggest a few things we can do in our "with his fellows" relationships I mentioned above. You don't have to be a theologian to understand them and you don't have to be somebody special to implement them. They are simple things, but very powerful and effective.

Let us love one another (1 Jn. 4:7). The reason is stated. It's simple: "for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." How do we love one another? Several things come to mind. We seek what is best for one another. We give the benefit of the doubt in matters that are less than clear. We prop one another up. We stoop down to help. We are more than friends, we are true friends. We are gentle and patient with one another, assigning to one another the highest motives, no matter the endeavor. That doesn't mean we compromise, or that we don't discipline when it's necessary; but in both cases we do so with the hope of helping, not hurting. We are careful with one another's feelings, cautious about any kind of hurtful remarks or harmful statements. Our friend "One Another" has warts; we learn to live with them. Idiosyncrasies are part of relationships; we endure them—in the true spirit of love. To love one another is to be like God. He loved us in spite of our sins.

Let us love what we are able to do (Eccles. 9:10). Work is part of who and what we are. Work demands wages. And work precedes rest. Without work there is no wage; without work there is no legitimate rest. We should love what God has made it possible for us to do. Our talents are ours and no one else's. We should be glad for them. The wise man said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Work is satisfying. It generates an amount of peace in our minds to know that we've done the best we can.

Loafing, sloth, laziness, have no place in the life of a godly person. If you are digging a ditch, thank God you're able to dig. If you're an accountant for some huge firm, be grateful for the ability God gave you to do that kind of work. But never—never—never look down on the one who dug the ditch, poured the foundation, painted the room, or cleans the restrooms where you work. Let us love our work and do it diligently. Be it great or small in the eyes of men, God sees your performance, not just the job.

Let us love who we are (Eph. 1:3-14). We must never be pompous or proud, but we must never be timid or ashamed, either. There's a fine line, I know, between the two, but it must be drawn nevertheless. We can have confidence without being arrogant; we can show our faith without being excessively proud; we can demonstrate to those round about us that we are totally convicted without looking down on those who are not. We should feel good about who we are. We are "chosen...from the foundation of the world." God has "predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ." He has "made us accepted in the beloved." He has "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure..." (Eph. 1:4-9). How can we be disconsolate? How can we complain about our station in life? How can we feel inadequate or put upon by life? We are Christians! Let us rejoice in our salvation. But not too much.

Let us learn to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43). I said learn to love your enemies. That's hard. But we're never more like God than when we love those who don't deserve it, especially when we love those that don't love us back. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?" asked Jesus. "Do not the publicans even the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (Matt. 5:46-47) We are expected to go the extra mile, give the extra effort, provide the little something special to every occasion. If we don't, we're no better than the average. You can't be average and be a Christian. If you love your enemy, if you give to those that don't deserve, if you provide for those who are biting your hand even as you do it, you are becoming like your Father who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It's hard to love those who are giving you trouble, but it's right. Do it anyway. Love those that spitefully use you and persecute you and you will be like your Father.