

Loving Like God



"GOD IS LOVE"

John 3:16 has been called the golden text of the Bible, and with good reason. In it we are told of the greatest Giver, the greatest gift, the greatest love, and the greatest blessing. "God so loved the world," because "God is love" (1 John 4:8). *Agape* is the strongest Greek term for the highest degree of love (Greek was the original language of the New Testament). God is *agape*. He seeks our good. He wants the best for us. "*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10). "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

THE CALL TO LOVE

The Bible makes clear that we are to love God and love people with the strongest, highest degree of love--that degree of love with which God loves us. "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5:48). "*[L]ove the LORD your God*" (Matthew 22:37), and "*love one another*" (1 John 3:23).

BIBLICAL LOVE

Many people have a distorted concept of what biblical love is. Some think love throws a blanket of charity over everything so that nothing matters. They would have God saying, "I love you, so whatever you do is okay with Me. Whatever you want, I want you to have." That's not the way we define our love for our children. Why would we think God's love to us would be thus defined? "*[W]hom the Lord loves He chastens*" (Hebrews 12:6). Why are some things not okay with God? It is because He loves. *Agape* is not always shown by doing what the loved one desires. It is shown by doing what is best for the loved one. There can be a big difference.

LOVE AND TRUTH

When you stand up for the truth, expose error, and condemn sin, almost invariably someone will say, "You're not very loving." Does love exclude defending the truth? The Lord's apostle taught us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We are to say the truth in an attitude of love. Love and truth go hand-in-hand. A defense of the truth and biblical love have always characterized God.

"*God is love,*" yet He defends the truth. Would we accuse God of lacking love when He punished Cain (Genesis 4:8-15)? When He destroyed the wicked world in the great flood (Genesis 6-8)? When He punished Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 11:1-3)? Will we accuse Him of lacking love when

we find ourselves banished from His presence, because something else was more important than trusting and obeying Him? The God of love has always defended His truth.

The loving Savior warned against vain worship and false doctrines, and their consequences: "*[I]n vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9). He defended the truth and loved people at the same time. "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5). God defended his truth because He loves humanity. Jesus defended His truth because He loves humanity. We ought to follow that perfect example.

Christians who say, "I just love everybody, that's why I never confront anyone" are not being loving. You cannot biblically love God, Jesus, and people without contending for the truth. "*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...that in all things God may be glorified*" (1 Peter 4:11). Biblical love demands that Christians be "*set for the defense of the gospel*" (Philippians 1: 17, KJV), and "*[h]old fast the pattern of sound words*" (2 Timothy 1:13). Love demands defending the truth.

WHEN WE LOVE...

When we love God and His word, we will all draw our water from the same well and "*speak the same thing*" (1 Corinthians 1:10). We will not seek to please ourselves, but to please the Lord and abide in His will. We will not be eager to sow discord. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15), and stick to the truth above everything else.

WHEN THERE IS A LACK OF LOVE...

When there is a lack of love for the truth, people have a tendency to promote self. Yet...

- Love "does not parade itself"
(1 Corinthians 13:4).
- Love "is not puffed up"
(1 Corinthians 13:4).
- Love is eager to believe the best that it reasonably can about every person and every situation
(1 Corinthians 13:7).
- Love "perseveres"
(1 Corinthians 13:7).
- Love fights "the good fight of faith"
(1 Timothy 6:12).

Now abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is the greatest because it is the source of the action of God.

CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

Love caused God to create us in the beginning. Love prompted God to seek our

redemption. Do you know anyone whom God does not love? Do you know anyone whom Christ does not love? Do you know anyone whom you do not love? If so, you need to repent of your lack of love, and come to possess the love God possesses for mankind. Loving like God means wanting the best for everyone, and working to bring it about.

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