

Where Love Lives

The Heart of Christianity

Introduction: One of the most distinctive attributes of the Christian religion is its emphasis, its unalterable demand, for its adherents to love. While other religions concern themselves largely with the individual's personal quest for forms and observance of ritualistic legalism, Christianity has its focus on what its adherents do in relation to God and other human beings. This outward expression of unconditional, tireless, good will is love. In the King James Version of the New Testament, it is found at least 261 times, often as a command or direction given by Jesus or His Apostles. If we claim Christianity as our religion, then we must learn where love is found and in whose heart it lives.

Lesson Aim: The Listener Will be challenged to examine their heart to determine if, in fact, love abides within, to be certain we qualify as mature Christians.

I. LOVE LIVES IN THE HEART OF THE TRUE WORSHIPPER.

- A. The greatest commandment was to *love God foremost* – **Mark 12:28-30**.
1. It encompasses the totality of the worshipper; all that he/she is.
 2. This involves complete self-sacrifice, a “whole burnt offering” – **Romans 12:1**.
 3. This is *not a subjective feeling!* It is TOTAL COMMITMENT to God. *Do we have this?*
- B. We express our love for God when we *render proper homage to Him*.
1. God expects worshippers to approach Him “*in spirit and in truth*” – **John 4:24**.
 2. This demands PROPER WORSHIP, not that which may be arbitrarily assigned!!
 3. The Lord's Supper is a good example of this, as it has been disenfranchised from most denominational bodies despite the solemnity and supreme focus which deserves highest regard of Christians – **1 Cor. 11:20ff**.
 4. In many cases, the money plate is passed around far more than the communion plate! Is this love of God or love of money, which is the root of all evil?
- C. Those who love God will *give God what He desires of us and reject what He has not indicated that He desires, out of love for Him*.
1. The lesson of Nadab and Abihu should reinforce this attitude! – **Lev. 10:1-2**.
 2. We are dealing with Almighty God, not some contemptuous person; He WILL BE glorified. *We are in no position to judge Him on anything!*

II. LOVE LIVES IN THE DESIRES OF THE DISCERNING, MATURE, CHRISTIAN

- A. Love for God will produce a *keen desire for a pursuit of righteousness*.
1. We like to emulate those we truly love and admire. Ex. Fathers and sons.
 2. We are to be “holy” (righteous) because our Heavenly Father is – **1 Peter 1:14-17**.
- B. The discerning servant of God will therefore *support truth and reject error*.
1. Truth is whatever God has told us *via His revealed Word* – **John 17:17**.
 2. Error stems from three loveless issues: 1) willful neglect of truth, 2) willful amending of truth, and 3) willful suppression of truth:
 - a. *Neglect* – we know what God requires *but we ignore it* – **1 John 5:16**.
 - b. *Amending* – we decide to *alter what God says to suit ourselves* – **2 Tim. 4:3**.
 - c. *Suppression* – we *reject God's Word and/or try to silence it* – **Romans 1:8**.

- C. Those who love God and their fellow man *will live by the Way Jesus has shown us.*
 - 1. Jesus came to fulfill the will of His Heavenly Father and comported Himself appropriately! *He loved people because God loves people!*
 - 2. He serves as our ROLE MODEL on how to live a life of love toward God.
 - 3. Spiritually mature Christians will follow in His steps completely, becoming more and more like Him, conforming to His image, not the world's! – **1 John 2:15-17.**

III. LOVE LIVES IN THE ACTS OF THE COMPASSIONATE GIVER

- A. It is a delusion to imagine we can love God *and not others.*
 - 1. This is what most religions fail to understand and appreciate as they are based largely on loveless ritual and repetitive ordinances as the main means to please God.
 - 2. Jesus came to fully demonstrate to us that GOD IS LOVE – **1 John 4:7-8.**
 - a. By His miracles of healing and exorcism – **Luke 13:10-17; Matt. 8:28ff.**
 - b. By His respect to the Law He came to fulfill – **Mark 5:17; Matt. 23:1ff.**
 - c. By His compassion on the thankless – **Luke 17:11-19.**
 - d. By His suppression of indignation at the vileness of humanity – **Mark 3:1-5.**
 - e. By His ultimate sacrifice for the unworthy – **Romans 5:6-8.**
- B. All the faith in the world will not save if we *shirk our responsibilities to others.*
 - 1. If we only love those who love us, we are no better than sinners – **Matt. 5:44-46.**
 - 2. Without love, *faith and good works are meaningless!* – **1 Cor. 13:2-3; James 2:14-17.**
 - 3. Love enables us to meet the needs of our brethren! This has always been one of the greatest appeals of Christianity to the world! – **1 John 3:14-18.**
 - 4. Let us ask ourselves: *have we lost sight of this?*
- C. Those who truly love will be those *who show the compassionate love of Christ.*
 - 1. We will *love the unlovable and loveless regardless.* Hate the sin, love the sinner.
 - 2. We will use what we have and can to aid those who are less fortunate with what God has provided us – **James 1:27.**
 - 3. Most importantly, we will persevere in our attempts to save their souls, giving them the Bread of Life, as Jesus has commanded – **Matt. 14:16; Mark 6:37** with **Matt. 28:18-20.**

Conclusion: Love is of God because God is love Himself. If God were evil, I guarantee you there would not be the kind of world we live in, it would be ordered as He wills alone. The fact that the world is evil is proof that God loves because it means He puts up with a creation in near total rebellion to Him, blessing even the vilest haters of Him, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Satan would never do that, nor would any human being!*

God is letting this play out to fulfill His own ends. Our part in it is to be just as He is, as spiritually mature as possible. This means we will love like Him. Love will be alive in us. Our hearts will be where love lives. You are welcome to partake of it through your obedience to the faith as outlined in the New Testament. Please do so today.