



Loving Your Brothers and Sisters

by brother Edgar

THE LORD Jesus put special emphasis on loving our brothers and sisters. Jesus prayed in the garden to His Father; “that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.”¹⁰³⁷ Jesus gives the purpose for love in the body of Christ: “That the world might believe!” Jesus gave a very specific commandment in John 15: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”¹⁰³⁸ In John 13, Jesus said: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”¹⁰³⁹

While we have these clear commandments from the Lord we find it difficult to get along with sisters and brothers. They behave differently, have different opinions, look differently, speak differently, have a different education, and a different status. There are real or perceived inequities based on our opinions and judgments. Even in

¹⁰³⁷ John 17:21

¹⁰³⁸ John 15:12-13

¹⁰³⁹ John 13:34-35

the early Church in the Book of Acts we find disagreement. In Acts chapter 6 there was dispute and murmurings.¹⁰⁴⁰ Other passages in the New Testament refer to biting and devouring, pride,¹⁰⁴¹ provoking, envy,¹⁰⁴² anger,¹⁰⁴³ unforgiveness,¹⁰⁴⁴ bitterness,¹⁰⁴⁵ and division¹⁰⁴⁶ in the body of Christ. Satan will use any openings to try and destroy a gathering of believers through these sins which so easily beset us. The Apostle John reminds us: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”¹⁰⁴⁷

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”¹⁰⁴⁸

“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Jesus explains in Matthew 5: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”¹⁰⁵⁰

We are to love our sisters and brothers regardless of whether they look different, speak different or have different opinions. The

¹⁰⁴⁰ Acts 6:1

¹⁰⁴¹ Mark 7:22

¹⁰⁴² 1 Timothy 6:4

¹⁰⁴³ Colossians 3:8

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mark 11:26

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ephesians 4:31

¹⁰⁴⁶ Jude 1:19

¹⁰⁴⁷ 1 John 4:7-8

¹⁰⁴⁸ 1 John 4:20

¹⁰⁴⁹ 1 John 3:15-16

¹⁰⁵⁰ Matthew 5:43-48

commandment to love applies whether they are nice, whether they have invited others to their house and not us, or whether they speak about us. Jesus is clear; we are to love even those who do not appear to love us.

“What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.”¹⁰⁵¹

“You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments when you have truly lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.”¹⁰⁵²

Here are 3 principles that will help us love our sisters and brothers in our gatherings of believers:

I.) Every sister or brother is made in the image of God. In Genesis, God said: “Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness.”¹⁰⁵³

II.) Every sister or brother has a soul with a greater value than this world. Scripture says; “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”¹⁰⁵⁴ God sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Jesus the Son of God would not have come to die for us if our soul was worth nothing. Our soul has a great value because Jesus died for us.

III.) Every sister or brother can do at least one thing better than I can. God has given each of us one or more spiritual gifts and responsibilities that set us apart from our brothers and sisters. According to 1 Corinthians 12, the Holy Spirit has given each one in the body of Christ a particular function. What would the ear do without the eyes? The body of Christ would be blind. What would the feet do without the hands? What would the heart do without the bowels? There is a task for each member of the body.¹⁰⁵⁵

So, the three points that help us esteem each other better and learn how to love are:

¹⁰⁵¹ Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)

¹⁰⁵² Henry Drummond (1851-1897)

¹⁰⁵³ Genesis 1:26

¹⁰⁵⁴ Mark 8:36

¹⁰⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:15-20

A.) Each person is made in the Image of God. B.) Every soul has a value greater than this world. C.) Everyone can do at least one thing better than I can.

Look at your sisters and brothers and see their strength and not their weaknesses. Think of whatsoever is lovely. Look at your sisters and brothers and see their beauty and not their faults. Esteem them better than yourself and you will learn to love and become *one*.

THE MISUSE OF AGAPE LOVE

One of the areas of danger in gatherings of believers is the misuse by men, women and youth of the blessed gift of *agape* love God has given all that are born again.

God has given true believers an unselfish, unconditional and sacrificial love which is called *agape* love. God exemplified this love first, by offering up His Son on a cross, to die for us that we might be able to live eternally in heaven and have peace with God the Father.¹⁰⁵⁶ When we are born again by repenting¹⁰⁵⁷ and accepting Jesus as our Savior,¹⁰⁵⁸ this unselfish love is given to us by God, to love Him, and to love and win others for Christ Jesus. This love is so very attractive and draws men, women and children into the fellowship and under the sound of the Gospel.

HOUSE CHURCHES AND TEMPTATION

1 Corinthians 13 tells us that without love we are nothing.¹⁰⁵⁹ We must share the love of the Lord Jesus.

Many house Churches do not have much room. There is close contact and touching at times. Satan conspires with our old flesh to bring about temptation. Such temptations come to our mind, emotions, feelings and desires. The temptations are then used by Satan to entice our flesh, further resulting in sinful thoughts and sinful behavior, to destroy the fellowship. He is the father of lies and a

¹⁰⁵⁶ John 3:16

¹⁰⁵⁷ 2 Peter 3:9

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ephesians 3:17

¹⁰⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:2

murderer. Satan encircles us like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The act of *agape* love, the kindness, the joy, the selfless sharing of one self with others becomes a temptation for the carnal Christians and for visitors who are not yet born again. As lonely and rejected people come to the house fellowship they may attempt to establish contacts and relationships that are of the flesh, the world and Satan. *Lust takes and love gives.*

The leaders and elders must hold each other and the fellowship accountable that no immoral behavior is permitted to be part of the fellowship.¹⁰⁶⁰ If you permit it Satan will destroy the fellowship.

CORRECTION IN GOD'S HOUSE

Firstly at all cost a sin must be brought out into the light¹⁰⁶¹ and there should be forgiveness sought by all involved.¹⁰⁶² If one is not truly repenting and humbling themselves then Scripture provides the way for correction when the laws of God are broken resulting in the expulsion of the sinner for a period of time. Please read 1 Corinthians Chapter 5, where an immoral man is given to Satan for a time:

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the Name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with

¹⁰⁶⁰ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

¹⁰⁶¹ 1 John 1:6

¹⁰⁶² Matthew 18:15-17

the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the Church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked person from among you.’”¹⁰⁶³

EVIDENCE OF TURNING FROM SIN

In time, and where there is evidence, that the sinner has repented and changed his or her behavior, the brother or sister should be forgiven and reintroduced to the fellowship. This is described in 2 Corinthians 2:

“If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”¹⁰⁶⁴

When a brother or sister, who has sinned, is reintroduced to the fellowship, there needs to be evidence, that they have repented and turned from their sin:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶³ 1 Corinthians 5

¹⁰⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

¹⁰⁶⁵ 1 John 1:9

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”¹⁰⁶⁶

If others have been hurt there should be the asking of forgiveness by the sinner. Scripture says:

“Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”¹⁰⁶⁷

If the person the sinner is seeking forgiveness from does not want to forgive, then that does not prevent the sinner from rejoining the fellowship, as he or she has tried to seek forgiveness. The person who has been harmed and does not want to forgive needs to be counseled to forgive, as God has forgiven, to reestablish unity.

If any harm has been done, the sinner must make restitution where possible. This shows that he or she has truly repented. Consider Zacchaeus when he repented: he gave away half of what he owned to the poor and paid back 4 times the amount that he cheated out of people.¹⁰⁶⁸

Lastly, if there are any accusations against elders in the fellowship, Scripture says:

“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.”¹⁰⁶⁹

We must always act with love for this is the heart of our Father in heaven. We love our sisters and brothers unconditionally but we are not permitted to tolerate open sin in our fellowships. Some might say this is not loving and not merciful. God loves all the world but He does not want His Flock ravished by the evil one through sin. We act in love and we will love those that have strayed dealing with them in kindness and gentleness. “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”¹⁰⁷⁰

¹⁰⁶⁶ Matthew 3:8

¹⁰⁶⁷ Matthew 5:24

¹⁰⁶⁸ Luke 19:5-10

¹⁰⁶⁹ 1 Timothy 5:19

¹⁰⁷⁰ Galatians 6:1