



Volume 9, Number 2

The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

February, 2007

Love—What the World Needs Now

Burt Bacharach and Hal David wrote the following lyrics:
*What the world needs now
Is love, sweet love
It's the only thing there's just
too little of.*

How could you disagree with the songwriters? We all want love. Several years ago, Thomas Malone, a psychiatrist in Atlanta said, "Almost every emotional problem can be summed up in one particular bit of behavior. It's a person walking around screaming, 'Love me! Love Me!' That's all. He goes through a million manipulations to get somebody to love him." The late Eric Fromm, also a noted figure in the mental health field, said, "The final goal in all therapy is to release within the individual a greater capacity for love."

The songwriters and the therapists did not make a new discovery in our time. Jesus said "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). He also said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends"(John 15:13).

In one way or another you

can trace the root cause of practically all human conflict and degeneracy to a lack of love. Our involvement with family ministry convinces us that families are breaking down in the Western world because we neither understand nor properly practice love.

But why is it so hard? If the answer to love will cure some of life's worst problems, why don't more people do it? Will people really punish themselves and refuse to provide what they need for emotional and spiritual survival? Apparently they do, but there is really more than one reason why people don't love.

1. We confuse love with sentimentality. Aldous Huxley was a cynical secularist, but he was not entirely wrong when he wrote, "Of all the worn, smudged, dog-eared words in our vocabulary, love is surely the grubbiest, smelliest and slimiest." What was Huxley getting at? Perhaps he was taking a swipe at sentimentality. Some people don't think you love at all if you don't have warm, tender, caring feelings. Husbands and wives walk away from each other with the lame excuse, "I don't love him/her anymore." If they really want to stick the knife in a partner's back and twist it, they will say, "I never did love you." If you really want to make

a mess of your relationship, you might try saying that in front of your children. What people actually mean when they say that kind of thing is that their sentimental feelings are no longer present. But that's not love in the truest sense. Look carefully at the words of Jesus. He said "A new commandment I give you." You don't command a sentiment. Sentiments fluctuate like the weather, food preferences and clothing styles. Marriage is not based on sentiment. No where does the Bible say that we are entitled to have marriage partners who are intelligent, attractive, romantic, affectionate and polite. What the Bible does say is "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).

2. We confuse love with sexuality. With ever increasing regularity we hear sexual intercourse described as "making love." When your local movie theater features a love story, you're almost guaranteed that the protagonists will end up in the same bed together and it's a pretty safe bet that they will not be married to each other. Somehow we have bought into a belief that if you really love a person of another gender, you will prove that love by performing a sex act. The Greek word for sexual love is "eros." That word never appears in the New

Testament. When Jesus commanded love he used the word "agapao" which is a type of love which can only be known by the actions it prompts. It is a love that does not always run with natural inclinations, a love in which you give yourself to another person unselfishly. You even sacrifice your own interests and desires for the good of the other person.

3. It is difficult to practice love because it is often painful. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." When you do that, you aren't always appreciated. When you do that, you make yourself vulnerable. Sometimes people don't understand your intentions. Sometimes they take advantage of you. People have the capacity to hurt you and it is very tempting to retreat from expressing love to anyone when you have been hurt. A person who has been abused sexually, physically or verbally may find it hard to ever risk loving again. It's human nature to be self-protective.

4. It is difficult to love because many of us have not been trained to love. We don't instinctively know how to love. If we did there would have been no need for the Bible writers to tell us, "love one another." It's necessary to acquire many skills in life, like swimming and riding a bicycle. We have the capacity to do those things, but we have to develop our capabilities. I know just enough of the Spanish language to get my-

self in trouble. I can order from a menu in South America and I know how to find the rest room, but don't ask me to discuss events of the day. However, I believe that I have the capacity to learn how to speak Spanish. I'm a reasonably intelligent person. I have a working knowledge of grammar, which is essential to all languages. If I ever decide I want to pay the price of becoming fluent in the Spanish language, I will have to submit to training.

The same thing is true with loving. Some of us are taught how to love by our parents. Some of us don't get that from our parents, so we look elsewhere for training. Books can help. Workshops and seminars can help. Mentors can help. Sometimes counselors can be effective in love training but the Bible is our primary love-training manual because Jesus Christ models love. Near the end of his personal ministry, he knew it was time to leave this world. According to John 13:1, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

CONCLUSION

To us it seems strange that the whole world screams for love and yet they look for it everywhere except in the one credible place they can find it - the Word of God. Dr. Malone, the Atlanta psychiatrist, who spoke of people screaming for love, also said, "When they realize that if they give up their screaming and go on to the other business of loving another human, they can get all the love they have been screaming for all their lives." I wonder if

The Family Friend

Published Monthly by
Calvert City church of Christ

he ever read Matthew 10:39. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

—Norman & Ann Bales, **All About Families**, 1/10/01

Grief, Part 2

In our first article we stated, "*Grief is like peeling an onion. It comes off one layer at a time, and you cry a lot.*" The first layer is, "Will I Survive?" The next layer is "Reality" and that is a difficult one. You realize you will/must learn to live without your loved one because your loved one is dead and is not coming back. It is good that this stage does not last as long, because we could not stand the pain if it did last much longer. There are no set rules for walking through this stage, but we offer some thoughts that might help.

Don't Panic—You are not losing your mind. Strange feelings and unusual thoughts are normal. These thoughts and feelings will pass. Panic makes them worse.

Don't Hurry—Some do not feel free to grieve and others feel they are supposed to be strong enough to get over grief in a hurry. We give permission for a broken leg to heal, but often will not allow time for a broken heart to heal.

—From, ***Will I Survive This Pain?*** by Doug Manning, via Church Street Church of Christ bulletin (continued from last month)