

Eternity Daily Bible Study

The Importance Of Love

Contact: [John Edmiston](#)

Number: 18

Verses: Acts 10:34,35 & James 2:1-5, 8-9

Topic: Love Is Unbiased

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Acts 10:34-35 *Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Truly I see that God is no respecter of persons; (35) but in every nation he who fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him.*

James 2:1-5 *My brothers, do not have the faith of our Lord Christ, the Lord of glory, with respecter of faces. (2) For if there comes a gold-fingered man in fancy clothing into your assembly, and if there also comes in a poor man in shabby clothing, (3) and if you have respect to him who has the fancy clothing and say to him, You sit here in a good place, and say to the poor, You stand there, or sit here under my footstool; (4) Did you not make a difference among yourselves and became judges with evil thoughts? (5) Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?*

James 2:8-9 *If you fulfill the royal Law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. (9) But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin and are convicted by the Law as transgressors.*

Sad to say, but race, class and culture are among the greatest social boundaries to brotherly Christian love. We are programmed, by our upbringing to prefer the rich over the poor, our culture over other cultures, and our class and social group over other social classes and groups.

In Acts 10 the apostle Peter had to receive a vision three times from God, some rebukes, and direct instruction from the Holy Spirit before he would even consider going to a Gentile's home (that of Cornelius) and even afterward (Acts 11) he was subjected to much opposition from his fellow Jewish Christians.

In James chapter 2 the false distinctions between rich and poor and the social pecking orders in the church are called "judging with evil motives". Such partiality is even seen as a major transgression against the royal law of love!

God pushes us to love those we would not normally love including the poor, the blind, the powerless, and the disabled:

Luke 14:13-14 *But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, (14) and you shall be blessed, for they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*

We are to enlarge the circle of our heart and to consider ourselves reconciled to all!

Colossians 1:20-22 *And through Him having made peace through the blood of His cross, it pleased the Father to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether the things on earth or the things in Heaven. (21) And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish, and without charge in His sight,*

If our brother and sister in Christ has been reconciled to God, and we also have been reconciled to God, then logically we should consider ourselves also to be at peace and as reconciled with them!

This means that there should be no culture gap, no income gap, no gap over musical tastes, no generation gap, no gap over clothing or fashion or appearance or food or drink or any other thing!

If a young man with purple hair and a t-shirt comes into church and thinks that I am old and stupid, then that's bias! On the other hand if I think that young person is inferior in some way – that is also bias! I am his brother and he is mine!

Where I live in Los Angeles there is a lot of “cyber-snobbery” over mobile phones, makes of laptop etc. The iPhone trumps the Blackberry which in turn trumps a cheap LG feature phone etc. Social rank is “phone rank” and there is even a term “phone shame” for people so poor that they have a really old cell phone! This may, at first blush, seem “harmless” but in God's eyes it is completely anti-Christian!

No possession or adornment (gold rings, fine clothes) makes us superior in God's eyes! God is “no respecter of persons! That means that God does not care or “respect you more” whether you are a Prime Minister or a garbage collector. Your rank, achievements, possessions, looks and stature are as nothing in God's sight.

1 Samuel 16:7 *But Jehovah said to Samuel, Do not look on his face, nor on his height, because I have refused him. For He does not see as man sees. For man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart.*

God's promotions and demotions have absolutely nothing to do with our personal or social attributes and standing in life:

Daniel 4:17 *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, so that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will, and sets up over it the lowest of men.*

Love does not play favorites, does not establish a social pecking order or form cliques or act as if there are “in” and “out” groups. Neither is love racially prejudiced. Love is colorblind!

Love does not inherit grudges or carry out vendettas. In Christ the Jews will love the Arabs and vice-versa, and the Hatfield's will love the McCoy's. Old wars are forgotten about (for instance I cannot say to a Japanese person that I will not associate with them because they attacked my country of Australia in WW2!).

This includes denominational wars between Pentecostals and Baptists, Protestant and Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites, Orthodox Christians and everyone else and so on.

Just because we were persecuted by group X three hundred years ago does not mean we can still refuse to fellowship with them! (However wrong doctrine is still a serious matter).

We have got to stop looking on the outside of people and reading the "labels" that they wear (and sometimes ostentatiously display). God looks on the heart and searches for faith, hope and love; and we should also adopt a similar attitude.

In Christ, the strong should not despise the weak but should rather serve them!

Romans 15:1-3 *Then we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (2) Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good, to building up. (3) For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."*

The "strong" group may include the rich, the educated, the fit and healthy, those with deep Bible knowledge etc. The "weak" group may include the poor, the uneducated, the disabled and new believers. The physically strong should help the disabled, those who have lots of Bible knowledge should help new believers, those who are rich should serve the poor and those who are educated should assist the uneducated (say with taxes and government forms).

In the larger picture, rich churches should help poor churches, mega-church pastors should help struggling pastors, and first-world denominations should help Third World denominational partners.

Our love has to stretch a little bit further tomorrow than it did today. Just as Peter was stretched to go beyond his natural social boundaries, so too will you and I be stretched to love others whom we are not 100% comfortable with.

If our love is to be righteous and ethical it has to be impartial! The apostles were very serious concerning this:

1 Timothy 5:21 *I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you guard these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first truly pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

Notice the terms – without prejudice, without partiality, and without hypocrisy! We are to do absolutely NOTHING by partiality. This requires great self-awareness and self-discipline. Take a moment to ask God where you are being biased, and then for help to change your ways into the ways of Christ and the ways of love!

Blessings,

John Edmiston
Chairman/ CEO
Cybermissions

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www.globalchristians.org
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Skype ID: johnedmiston

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